

**PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 INFLUENZA (HUMAN SWINE INFLUENZA)****VACCINATION UPDATE # 7: 21 January 2010****GENERAL PRACTITIONERS and ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICES***Please distribute this information to all of your practice staff***Key points**

1. Please encourage Panvax® vaccination for all your patients >6 months of age, especially those at increased risk for severe disease.
2. Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza activity remains high overseas – it is likely to cause another severe season in Australia in 2010.
3. Children aged 0-4 years had the highest rate of hospitalisation from pandemic influenza in 2009.

**Global situation**

- Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza remains highly active in many parts of the world and is the predominant influenza strain.
- Even regions that had high levels of disease activity in April-May 2009 had significant surges in activity in November-December 2009.
- The disease does not appear to have changed significantly over time: younger age groups are disproportionately affected compared with usual seasonal influenza pattern.
- In 2009, children aged 0-4 years experienced the highest rates of hospitalisation of any age group in NSW. Only 50% of those hospitalised had pre-existing conditions.

**What can GPs do?**

Because of the possibility of another severe influenza season in 2010, it is essential that we increase uptake of the pandemic influenza vaccine now.

I encourage you to examine ways you can strongly promote vaccine uptake among your patients. You could consider:

- Setting up additional immunisation clinics;
- Posting signage encouraging vaccination (available from the below website); and
- Contacting patients at increased risk (small children and their carers, those with chronic medical conditions, Aboriginal patients and pregnant women) and encouraging vaccination.

Your Division of General Practice and local public health unit will be able to provide advice and support.

For the latest information on the vaccination program please refer to the NSW Health pandemic influenza website: <http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/index.asp>. This website is updated regularly.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Chant

Chief Health Officer and Deputy Director-General Population Health